

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

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"THIS IS A REAL EASTER"

The Bishop of Peterborough writes in his *Diocesan Leaflet*:

"The longer our experience of the Church of Christ, and the fuller our knowledge of its ways, the more we see how marvellously Christians have been guided in their arrangement of its times and seasons. We feel that every year as we emerge from the blackness and cold of winter into the brightness of Easter. The immortal hope has long been guiding us, and then suddenly we find ourselves, in fellowship with the disciples of our Lord, celebrating His Resurrection with all the joy of a new discovery.

"This is for ever true, but never more true than in these times, when we are able, out of our own adventures, to parallel the feeling of S. Peter and his friends. We look back five years, to the beginning of our own worst sufferings, when, with the invasion of Norway, we were first made aware of the fullness of the danger; and we carry our minds, through the months and years of strain and peril and fear, 'of moving accidents by flood and field,' to the spring of 1945, when we seem to be standing on the threshold of victory. A bright light shines before us, a great hope is breaking, the heaviness of the night gives way to the joy which comes in the morning.

"Now this is for us a real Easter. But Easter can never be fully enjoyed except by those who have made a good Lent, who, for the joy set before them, have borne the Cross, and, by bearing it, have brought themselves into Communion with their Risen Lord. In the same way the true, unalloyed happiness of peace restored to the world only belongs to those who have been steadfast and patient

and unselfish, who have not grumbled or coveted, who have carried other people's burdens, and have given their very best to the great cause for which the Allied Nations have fought. It is good to think that so many of our nation have come nobly through this ordeal—that so many, who will get no decorations or distinction, and certainly have not earned increased pay, or, very often, any pay at all, have mightily contributed to the victory which, please God, will now be ours.

"And let it not be forgotten that the keeping of Easter is something more than the celebration of high festival on Easter Day. It is the living of the life which belongs to those who are risen with Christ, have died to sin, and have set their affections firmly on things above. So too we, who have been in the great tribulation and are beginning to come out of it, must not behave as if now we could lay aside all effort, and leave the world to go along its own predestined course. The future lies with us, who have fought and suffered. Harder work lies before everyone: the work of remaking the world, and of establishing a new order in which the Risen Christ shall be All in All."

A CONFIRMATION IN HOLLAND

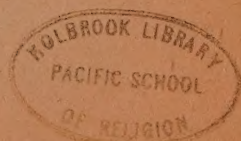
The Church Times (March 29th, 1945) gives the following account of a B.L.A. Confirmation in Holland:

"What are Confirmation services like for the men of the British Liberation Army, straight from the battlefield? Come with us, who are on active service, and see.

"You are sitting on a fifteen-hundred-weight truck, wedged between a Senior Chap-

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lain and his batman-driver. On the floor at your feet are a wooden cross and candlesticks designed and executed by a Czechoslovak master craftsman. There are also a pair of polished two-pounder shell cases for vases, and some branches of grey-green pine. Behind, in the truck, are five men, the youngest twenty-four, the oldest forty-two. They are to be confirmed now that a series of classes, taken at any available hour when they or the chaplain were free, are completed.

A New Road Sign

"Your route take you across miles of dead-flat waterlogged country. At every fork in the road are coloured signs, directing you to units far and near, warning you of craters ahead, of the road cracking, of the speed above which you must not go, of a cinema, a theatre, a garrison church. The signs increase in colour and variety, and suddenly among them is one newly-painted with the word 'Confirmation,' and an arrow beside it. You are thus guided to the Dutch Reformed church, where hangs a larger sign without an arrow. This is the place.

A Foreign Setting

"A Dutch Reformed church is more like an English Nonconformist chapel than one of our parish churches. The east end is dominated by an ornate pulpit, beneath which is the font and a plain table. On this table have been set the cross and candlesticks with lit candles, and vases of pine.

"Over a hundred and fifty candidates are seated in order. Behind them sit their officers and soldier friends, a brigadier among them representing the general. A few Dutch civilians, right at the back, wait with eager expectation to hear a Church of England service, and above all, to see a Church of England bishop.

"A door opens. The robed chaplains enter in procession, followed by the bishop in white cope and mitre, and his two chaplains.

A City Unshaken

"'Glorious things of thee are spoken.' Men's voices, singing in unison, match in volume the splendour of the words. For all present, the words take on a vivid meaning never fully realized before. All have come from a world where they have seen homes and villages and cities shattered. From these sights which are the background of their lives, the hymn lifts them up and sets their minds in the realm above earthly, temporal,

perishing, shaken things, where the Eternal King is in the Eternal City.

"There is a sudden interruption. Some forty more candidates arrive very late. They have been held up by heavy convoys on the roads, and have finally gone to the wrong church. So when one service is ended, the bishop, quite unperturbed, holds a second service for them alone, while the first go on to a very friendly tea party in the Salvation Army canteen.

"Two final memories remain. One is of the bishop shaking each man by the hand, and speaking to him words of greeting and cheer at the church door. The other is of the singing of the last hymn, 'O Jesus, I have promised'—sung so often at Confirmations in the past that, of late years, it has fallen into some disfavour. But we still use it. Many of the men have come straight from the battle, and to the battle by nightfall they will have returned.

'I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.'

THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Professor's Article in Occupied Denmark

The Danish paper, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, of February 3rd, contained an article by Professor N. H. Söe called, "The Church and Society." It is interesting to see the questions now being discussed in the Free and Liberated nations being also discussed in a Church newspaper of an occupied country.

"Can a people live a healthy and joyful life without faith? Is it possible to imagine principles, other than Christian ones, which can provide the power for the common constructive forces of a people in a common purpose? We think of the future with fear, but also with great hope. How many things of the past are dead for ever? How many others will be radically changed in the new era? We are looking for something solid, a connecting link to join us to the indispensable things of the past. Will the Church, in spite of all, prove to be the salvation of Denmark? Will the Christian faith have the same place in our national life as our old country churches had amongst the Danish peasantry? One must immediately say that Christianity and the Church are higher things, whose mission is not in the first place to guarantee us a healthy and useful society. It would not be a proof of their right to exist that they should provide all this for us. If God had

wished to create a healthy society by them, he would have used other methods, and a message different from that which will always remain incomprehensible and uncomfortable for all those who are not illuminated by the Spirit of God. If Christianity ought to preserve us from division and from dissolution into fragments, I cannot understand why Christ said that He came not to bring peace but a sword. Let us remember whenever we meet the tendency to subordinate the Church to social and national considerations, that the Apostle Peter said in very anti-modern fashion that the job of the Christian faith is the salvation of souls. The *raison d'être* of Christianity undoubtedly originates in that beyond to which it desires to conduct us. Do not let us forget that well organized societies have existed without the Christian faith, for example the Chinese Empire and the pagan States of our ancestors, although they also were bound together by the bonds of a common faith and religious ethic. Is it possible for a society to exist without this faith and common ethic? We pose this question because of the fact that we may perhaps be obliged to undertake the new experiment of building a society without religion, and this disturbs us. It has been tried in Russia during the last generation. Why has this new Russian society become so strong? Is it because it is united, not by a religious faith, but all the same by a faith in a common ideal—or only by force? Even if Christianity disappeared from Europe and no other faith or anti-religion took its place, there would still always be amongst the men who lived there a certain social and national order which would prevent them from devouring one another. . . . There is much which is not felt when one is secure and encouragement is only provided by 'reason' and 'conscience.' Our epoch has sufficiently shown us where this 'reason' takes us. Conscience, which is self-centred, scarcely inspires confidence as a counsellor. We have also been told that we ought to obey the eternal laws of life. The word 'life' has a pleasant sound, but facts have proved to us the fragility of 'the laws of life,' of which the interpretation varies so much, that they could not be the regulating authority of our life. We gain nothing by declaring that 'It is God Who has created life and that consequently the laws of life are the expression of the Will of God.' Modern German theology has not ceased to repeat this theory to us. It has led directly to the deification of blood and race stock. They can always be combined with the principles of Nietzsche on the subject of

Herrenmoral as well as with the theories of Albert Schweizer, who has made respect for all living things the central ethical principle of his life. This theory can also lead to better results and it will help the Christian idea to remain in power. But when the moment comes that it loses its hold, where does it lead us? It is our opinion that the Gospel of Christ teaches us what is right in the life of man, and the true principles which enable us to judge what is right from the national and social point of view. One trembles to think that Christianity may lose more of its influence over souls. One cannot deny that the Christian Church has not contributed as much as one would expect to the solution of our actual social and international problems. Christians should be ashamed that it is not they, but the atheist circles of Karl Marx who have protested most strongly against social injustice, although it should be recognized that society ought to be grateful for the social influence of the Church. It has propagated the Christian law that every man should regard his neighbour as his brother; we are still feeling the good influence of this law. In our society, even in those circles which are furthest removed from the Church, the traditional inheritance of Christian principles still lives, often enough without being recognized because they are secularized and travestied. It is probable that we shall recover materially from our catastrophes fairly easily, but let us hope that Christians will make such sacrifices as a contribution to this restoration, that they will have the right of requiring people to listen to their principles on the subject of the religious education of the human character, and that propaganda for the need of religious education will not have the appearance of trying to escape more easily from the material and economic sacrifices which will certainly be very heavy."

BISHOP FJELLBU'S ONE-ROOM "PALACE"

Travelling on skis, or on a sledge hauled by reindeer, or on top of a lorry piled high with goods, the newly appointed Bishop of the liberated part of North Norway, Arne Fjellbu, has now begun to investigate conditions in his war-shattered diocese. In an interview he states that in only three places are the churches still standing, while only two places have still got their chapels. In eleven towns and villages, including Vardö, Vadsö and Kirkenes, the churches and chapels have all been burnt down by the Germans. Even the churchyards were not left in peace.

At Kirkenes, for example, 130 bodies had to be dug up and re-buried elsewhere, because the Germans decided to build a railway line across the local churchyard.

Bishop Fjellbu is living in what is probably the tiniest episcopal residence in the world. It consists of one room, which combines the functions of sitting room, bedroom and reception room. The roof is so low that visitors have to stoop so as not to hit their heads against the ceiling.

PERSECUTION CONTINUES IN NORWAY

The Swedish Free Church Paper, *Svenska Morgonbladet*, of March 14th, contained the following information:—

"The Gestapo have arrested the Lutheran Pastors Husebye, Brönnöy and Tjensvold from Volda and Pastor Steinar, of Kjölledal, members of the Norwegian Mission Organization. The last was arrested on the occasion of a razzia in the Institute of Missions in Oslo. There were also arrested at the same time two sons of the missionaries, Andersen and Haaland. The Gestapo agents behaved themselves very brutally, knocking the prisoners down and kicking them. At Volda they also arrested the headmaster of the school and a theological student, named Gautestead. Pastor Husebye has belonged to the Y.M.C.A. since he was a young man, first as a member and then as Chief of the Youth Department, from 1930 to 1931, as General Secretary and as Chief of the Sea Scouts of Oslo. In 1932 Husebye became Vicar of Fauske in North Norway where his work was among the youth of Sulis."

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

"In the task of rebuilding," says one of the writers in the latest issue of *Christians and Jews*, the occasional review of the Council of Christians and Jews, "we believe this Council has an important part to play, not so much in the formulation of political or economic systems but in putting the plans and actions of statesmen to the tests of religion, and of seeing that they correspond with righteousness, mercy and peace."

Other articles in the same issue indicate some of the ways in which the Council is

beginning to translate this principle into practice, especially through the work of local Councils already established in various parts of the country.

The review contains a number of articles dealing with recent literature in the sphere of Jewish-Christian relations, and a tribute to the late Dr. William Temple by the Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz, C. H.

Another of the Council's publications is a pamphlet entitled *A Pattern For Peace*. It contains the texts of the American Three Faith Declaration on the fundamentals of peace and of the reply by the Council of Christians and Jews. This document, which was recently brought to the attention of the House of Lords by Viscount Samuel, provides a basis for joint study and discussion by those members of both Christian and Jewish communities who believe that there can be no permanent peace without a religious foundation and who desire to see "ethical and religious principles applied to relations between groups, to the social life of peoples and to international relations."

ARCHBISHOP'S MESSAGE TO THE FORCES

"The glow of victory is surging through our veins," declared Dr. Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, in an Easter message broadcast in the General Forces Programme.

"Victory is worth only what it brings of the things dear to God into the lives of men and nations for them, men must have faith and hope, which look beyond planning and political agreements and programmes to the sources of life. It would be quite easy to plan the world to death; to plan it to life in every human life is another matter.

"The task for Christian people the world over, with the certain hope of Christ in their hearts, is to lead the world to life.

"Let us take our share in its work—Christ's work—to give battle to all that destroys faith or kills hope in men's lives—to win for men of every race and colour fair treatment from their fellows, to end the slaveries of men to things and to all that treats men as things, to give all men freedom—but above all freedom of soul—to slay the enemies of the soul."